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H.V. Evatt Memorial Lecture

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H.V. EVATT MEMORIAL LECTURE.

BY Hon. Don Dunstan, Q.C., M.P.

Thank you for asking me to give this lecture in memory of Dr. H.V. Evatt.

Dr. Evatt was one of Australia's greatest jurists and its most widely known and successful Minister of External Affairs. As an architect of the United Nations, as its first President and as the Leader, during his time in representing this country at United Nations, of those forces in the world which were determined to make decisions for the future, not on the basis of interests or alliances, but on the basis of justice, he will long be remembered with gratitude and admiration by democrats throughout the world. It is often said that Australia is a part of Asia and that in foreign policy matters we must constantly look to the lands to the North of us where we need to assist development at a very much greater rate than we have so far. But this is not the only area of need or obligation for Australia in dealing with foreign countries close by - the Pacific Islands of Micronesia and Melanesia particularly, and the Kingdom of Tonga are areas where Australia owes it to the local populations to give assistance and to establish closer links than hitherto. In some of the Pacific Islands, of course, the undertakings and obligations of other countries of the world, of France, the United States, and of New Zealand, mean that Australian activity is less needed than it is in the Ocean and Line Islands, Nauru, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, in the condominium of the New Hebrides, in the Crown Colony of Fiji and the Kingdom of Tonga. These latter island groups, however, were, some of them, sources of labour for the development of the canefields in Australia and have been areas for Australian investment and trading which have provided Australians, through their investments, with very considerable returns. All of them are in need of considerable investment for development and require crash programs

in Education. With the possible exception of the Solomons and Tonga, Australian trading influences have predominated, and while administrative responsibility has been largely saddled by Great Britain, the profit from these largely British spheres of influence is mainly returned to Australian shareholders. I shall give details of some instances to illustrate this contention later in the lecture. What has Australia done in these areas in return for their profitable exploitation by Australian concerns? It has joined in the South Pacific Commission. The South Pacific Commission is a consultative and advisory body set up in 1947 by the six Governments then responsible for the administration of island territories in the South Pacific Region. They were Australia, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. Participation by the Netherlands Government ceased in 1962. The independent State of Western Samoa was admitted as a participating Government in October, 1964. The Commission's purpose is to advise participating Governments on ways of improving the wellbeing of the people of the Pacific Island territories. The Commission is concerned with health, economic and social matters, and its headquarters are at Noumea. The Commission consists of twelve commissioners, two from each Government. It normally holds one session a year and it has two auxiliary bodies, a Research Council and the South Pacific Conference (which consists of a meeting of delegates and advisers) and each of these meets annually. An examination of the proceedings of the 30th session of the South Pacific Commission reveals a total income to the South Pacific Commission of \$874,326 Australian, with contributions of participating Governments of \$804,000 Australian, of which Australia has contributed approximately 30%. On Health, \$106,511 was to be spent for continuing services in salaries, a small supply of solar stills and medicinal plants, and \$21,280 on seminars on Housing, Sanitation, Dental Health in Papua, and seminars on Ichthyosarcotoxism, Filariasis and Cardio-vascular diseases. On economic development,

there was \$148,535 for salaries of executives and agriculturists, a Fisheries Officer and Economist, and a training officer, and a special project on the Rhinoceros Beetle. An additional \$44,733 was set aside for a meeting on Banana production, a training course on Cocoa production, participation in forest ranges training, fisheries training course, fisheries feasibility study, technical meeting on fisheries, training course in animal husbandry, participation in other training courses and agricultural extension training. On Social Development, \$124,628 was to be spent on salaries of Education Officers with special work in language teaching, and community education, on audio visual aids and youth work and research in demography, and an additional \$23,100 for new activities and a conference on Adult Education, Seminar and supervision of indigenous Education Officers, training course in community education and in extension education, an original Seminar on youth and round tables of youth organizations. \$98,428 was set aside for publications and library, and \$14,000 advance provision for the 1969 conference.

It can be seen from an analysis of the work of the South Pacific Commission that while undoubtedly some of the work is valuable, with a budget of \$874,000 to cover the vast areas of the South Pacific Islands concerned, and with the great needs in the areas of Development and Education and Social Assistance in the South Pacific, the Commission is merely a convenient excuse for the participating Governments doing very little. \$874,000 assistance even in the areas which I have suggested are areas of moral obligation for Australia would be a woefully inadequate provision for assistance, but it is the total budget covering the whole of assistance beyond that given by Governments having existing responsibility directly in all the South Pacific territories, and it is ludicrous. The only other assistance which Australians have given apart from the occasional provision of scholarships in this country is the

assistance given from time to time by Australian trading concerns to public development. For instance, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company which dominates the economic scene in Fiji reports in its Annual Report this year that the Company and South Pacific Sugar Mills, an almost wholly owned subsidiary registered in Fiji, made a substantial donation to the University of the South Pacific at Suva and assisted it in other ways, and it provided 14 scholarships to students attending the University.

In the New Hebrides early in the 20th century, the late Sir James Burns, founder of Burns Philp, undertook to hold at the disposal of the Australian Commonwealth Government about 100,000 acres of land in the New Hebrides, (of which 50,000 acres has been found since to be non-existent,) for a Land Settlement scheme. Since then Burns Philp has held the legal title to this land but they have consulted the Australian Minister for External Affairs before disposing of it. On the last Report which I can find available, forty-four 99-year leases had been issued and twenty-five were still current in 1963, but it can hardly be said that this contributed a great deal to local development. No adequate provision for an Australian contribution to overall development in the South Pacific area has been drawn up or undertaken. What then is the situation in the islands to which we owe a clear obligation, and what sort of contribution should Australia make to them?

The constitutional situation in Nauru seems to have been resolved 'though, not one would think, adequately. In the Gilberts, Ocean Island, and the Phoenix and Line Islands, the population of some 50,000 is almost totally dependent upon phosphate with a limited future, the export of copra, and although fishing ought to have a considerable potential, it has not been adequately developed. What land has been alienated is owned largely by Australian companies. Education provision is inadequate and is

still largely in the hands of Missions receiving some Government subsidy. It was not until 1958 that the first boys in the Colony took the General Certificate of Education examination of London University, and not until 1957 that the first certificated teachers left the local teachers' training college. There is no adequate provision for self government. The British Phosphate Commission at Ocean Island provides employment for Gilbertese and Ellice labourers and provides revenue in Export Tax and a royalty to the Banabans and with the money and their phosphate royalties the latter have now bought Rabi Island in Fiji to which they have moved. There have been very considerable benefits to the British Commonwealth from the phosphate deposits on Ocean Island.

In the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, with a population of some 142,000, there is quite inadequate education provision. A Government white paper issued in August, 1962, set out future policy and plans which were accurately described as "modest". When the plans are fully operational which they should be at this stage but are not, it was forecast that a little over 5,000 Solomon Island children of school age would be catered for, which is about one-sixth of the children in the Protectorate. The economy depends almost entirely on the production of Copra, and apart from sales to the United Kingdom of Unilevers, the largest amount of this is sold to Australia. Indeed, on the last figures available to me, Australia has accounted for about 61% of exports from the Solomons, though this has fallen to 18.5%. Self-government is still at the rudimentary colonial level, with a Legislative Council with a Public Service majority.

The New Hebrides are an administered condominium with three sets of laws and three currencies, French, Australian and British, two kinds of policemen, British and French, and two systems of weights and measurements, British and metric. They have, nevertheless, an economy dominated by Australian concerns and particularly by Burns Philp (New Hebrides) Limited. While French

citizens have the right to elect a deputy to the French Parliament and a vote in French referenda, local self-government can be said to be effectively non-existent. Copra, frozen fish and manganese are the principal exports. Education is largely in the hands of Missions, and the first teacher training college opened in March, 1962. Very few overseas scholarships are established, the standard of education in British schools is not high, and the standard of education in French schools is lower. The total indigenous population is somewhere in the region of 72,000, and there are still native peoples who have little contact with either Government or Missions.

The Kingdom of Tonga is a rather different case. While being under British influence, it is an independent kingdom with its own constitutional monarchy, its own Parliament, and with effective Tongan control of its economy and development. With a population of about 70,000, almost entirely Tongan, it is in a much happier situation in controlling its own development than the other island groups to which I refer. Commerce is, however, in the hands of Australian companies, principally Burns Philp South Sea Company Limited, and W.R. Carpenters. Its principal exports are Copra and Bananas, in which Government agencies have a monopoly. Education is compulsory for all Tongans to the age of 14. 28 schools were already providing secondary education in 1962. The teachers' training college was established in 1944 and a number of Government overseas bursaries are provided. Tonga's principal needs will be in the provision of development grants and technical advice in the development of industries. Its future is likely to be very different from that of a nearby group to which I will now turn and which ought to give Australia the gravest cause for concern.

The Crown Colony of Fiji presents the greatest problem in the whole area, and the greatest area of need for Australian assistance. It is the largest, wealthiest, and most populous island group in the South Pacific. Australians have owned the major part of its industry, mining and trading since the 1880's. The European section of the population is overwhelmingly Australian in origin. The development of its economy, institutions and population has been for the monetary benefit of Australian investors, and the problems which now bedevil the Colony very largely arise from these facts.

Fiji was ceded to Queen Victoria in 1874 by the major chiefs of the islands. Fijian people lived (and for the most part continue to live) communally under the hierarchic system of Government dominated by the Chiefly caste. Fiji was so fertile that the Fijians could discharge their communal obligations and obtain their food and shelter with three hours' work a day. They had no motives to acquire material things in large quantities, and no motives in consequence to engage in regular or ordered labour.

A considerable amount of land was alienated from the Fijians in the early years - 415,000 acres of a total of 1,017,000 useable acres of land had been alienated in freehold by 1880, and the total alienated in freehold is now 534,000 acres.

The main crop of the land is sugar, and as the Fijians were not willing to work the sugar plantations an indentured labour system importing Indian coolies was commenced and Indian immigration allowed. The indentures have all long ago, of course, expired, but the Indian section of the populace now comprises more than 50 per cent, and the population break-up in Fiji today is as follows:-

Indian	250,513
Fijian	208,468
European	23,913
Others	<u>20,062</u>
TOTAL:	<u>502,956</u>

From the beginning the British Colonial Office chose to govern the Fijian population through the Chiefly system, and there is in effect a dual system of Government - one for the general population and a separate one for the Fijians. The Fijians have their own

Village and Township Councils, their own provincial ^{Councils} ~~Townships~~ and Governors, a Council of Chiefs, and a separate series of Fijian regulations, Courts and taxes. This whole system binds the Fijian people to the communal system of living, and even when they escape from this they are obliged to pay taxes to discharge their communal obligations. The Chiefs have benefited in position, prestige, and often emolument from this system, and are often fulsome in their praise of British Government and the benefits to the Fijians of European dominance. Their views on this subject are by no means uniformly shared by the small class of Fijian commoners which has had the benefit of higher education.

Further free-holding of land has not been allowed for some considerable period. Native lands are now reserved to the Fijians, and useable native land may be leased out with the approval of the Native Land Trust Board. However, although Fiji has now become land-hungry, there are useable areas of land still held out of production under the native land tenure.

The economy of the country is, as I have said, dominated by Australian interests. The sole sugar producer is the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, which has recently transferred its interests in the islands to its almost wholly Australian-owned subsidiary South Pacific Sugar Mills. Although South Pacific Sugar Mills has offered to sell at par fully paid shares to local residents, in fact only 2.2 per cent of the total \$19,000,000 of issued capital of South Pacific Sugar Mills is held by local residents of Fiji.

Some 324,000 tons of sugar will be produced in Fiji this year out of a total production by Colonial Sugar Refining Company interests of 888,000 tons. Possible expansion of sugar production in Fiji is, of course, limited by the international sugar situation where there is world over-production of sugar, and expansion in agricultural production will have to look to other areas.

Agriculture accounts for something like 85 per cent of total export trade, with sugar and molasses 64 per cent, copra and copra products about 20 per cent, and bananas about 2 per cent. No effective fishing industry has developed.

The other major export is in gold and manganese, and Emperor Gold Mines at Tavua is the biggest mine. It is significant that Fijians have provided about 2/3rds of the mining forces in Fiji. Emperor Gold Mines is a largely Australian-owned company.

Trading is mainly in the hands of Australian companies, the biggest trading companies being Burns Philp, and W.R. Carpenters, the latter having bought out Morris Hedstrom Limited, which was a local European-owned trading company with its share holdings largely in the hands of the Hedstrom family. There is considerable Fijian participation directly in copra production, but again a considerable proportion of the copra plantations are in the hands of European families of Australian origin.

The cost of development in Fiji in the provision of services and research has largely been borne by the British Government, and either paid for by the Colonial Office or out of local taxation.

The education system is quite inadequate. It is true that there has just started a University of the South Pacific, but prior to this tertiary education was confined to teachers training in the Central Medical School, which turned out diplomats able to act as native doctors in Fiji and other islands of the Pacific. There are more schools for Fijians, both Government and aided by the Government, than there are for Indians. It cannot be said that there are equal educational opportunities afforded for all children irrespective of race, religion, or the economic position of the parents. When I was a boy in school at Suva I attended a school which could only be attended by children with at least 50 per cent European blood. It was fully staffed with trained New Zealand teachers, and included a secondary department. There was no similar school for other races at the time available in the Colony. Although this position has markedly improved, the bitterness which occurred then lingers on.

There are only 153 Indian schools in the Colony as against 326 Fijian. By far the greatest proportion of school-age children not attending school are Indian, and in 1957 14,000 Indian children of school age and 2,600 Fijian children of school age were not attending

school. The school system is operated largely by Government support, by payment of ^{90%} ~~75%~~ of the salaries of school teachers employed in ^{registered} schools which are the responsibility of the local Fijian or Indian communities.

There are, in addition, 38 schools for which the Government is directly responsible, on the figures last available to me. Government and private undertakings between them provide a number of scholarships for secondary and tertiary specialised education.

The constitutional developments in Fiji have led to grave tensions. During a considerable portion of this century the Legislative Council in Fiji consisted of a President, or Speaker, 16 public servants, heads of departments, and 15 non-government members - 5 Europeans (3 elected by roll of European electors and 2 nominated by the Governor), 5 Indians (3 elected on an Indian electors' roll and 2 nominated by the Governor), and 5 Fijian members chosen by the Governor from a panel selected by the Council of Chiefs. The Governor had a right of veto over ordinances passed by the Legislative Council, and the system cannot be said to be any sort of effective self-Government.

Within the limited system Fijian commoners were entirely disfranchised, and the small European constituency was given the same representation as the very large Indian one. The argument of the Europeans in the Colony was that they were a buffer between Fijians who, in their view, were lovable but indolent and even feckless and therefore not able to protect themselves, and the aggressive, pushing, and able Indians.

The arguments for the policy of dividing and ruling are so old as these days merely to be regarded with cynicism by anyone attempting a reasonable assessment of the situation. The form of the Legislative Council was clearly to protect the Europeans and, to a certain lesser extent, the Fijian Chiefs. To say that the Europeans, whose economic domination of the community was obvious, were merely maintaining their position to protect the Fijians may have sounded good to a few Europeans who were capable of the grossest self-deception, but could have done so to nobody else.

In 1962 the Council was reconstituted, providing for a President or Speaker, and other unofficial members making a total of 19, consisting of 4 elected Europeans on the European roll and 2 nominated members, 4 elected Indian members on the Indian roll and 2 nominated members, 4 elected Fijian members elected on the Fijian roll and 2 chosen by the Council of Chiefs. Women were enfranchised then for the first time.

Agitation for political improvement resulted in a conference in Great Britain which produced a new Constitution. The Indians contended for a common roll with one vote one value. However, this was not accepted either by the British Government nor by Fijian or European members of the delegations. The Constitution provides for 36 elected members in which 9 Fijians are elected on a Fijian roll, 9 Indians are elected on an Indian roll, and 7 Europeans on a roll covering the rest. Two Fijians are elected by the Council of Chiefs, and 3 Fijians, 3 Indians, and 3 Europeans on a common roll. A Cabinet of 6 took office to form an Executive Council, with 4 officers appointed by the Governor.

On any examination of this Constitution it can be seen that the Indian community is put at a considerable disadvantage, and a premium is put upon the maintenance of community divisions.

Undoubtedly the Fijian people fear pressure from the Indians, and undoubtedly, too, the Europeans do not wish to depart from their position of privilege and dominance. There can be no justification whatever for the degree of required European representation in the Council, nor on any argument can I see justification, even with communal rolls, for the disproportionately small representation of the Indians.

The excuse put forward is that the Fijians ceded their country in trust to Great Britain and show no signs of wishing to give the dominant voice in their Government to the Indians. On the other hand, the Indians are now third, fourth, fifth, and even sixth-generation Fiji born. When they were first brought to Fiji on an indentured basis, it was stated in a despatch to India in 1875:-

"Indian settlers who have completed the terms of service to which they agreed as the return for the expense of bringing them to the colonies will be in all respects free men with privileges no wit inferior to those of any other class of Her Majesty's subjects resident in the colonies."

There can be no justification for making laws governing the peoples of Fiji and saying to one class of citizens that they are to be disadvantaged in the allocation of representatives who make those laws. Government is by consent of the governed, and it is of people, not of interests, wealth, race or community. That there is political turmoil in Fiji as a result of the Constitution now operating there cannot be surprising; what is, perhaps, surprising is that there has not been more. The enrolments of voters on the communal rolls are as follows:-

General voters	
(Mainly European and Chinese)	6,350
Fijian	74,000
Indian	75,973

When one works out the proportion of representation upon a racial basis, the disadvantage to the Indian population is very obvious. It is significant, moreover, that when there was an outbreak of violence and rioting in Suva some years ago, Fijian and Indian workers in the Suva area combined to loot and pillage European properties. In a penetrating article by Mr. Guy Harriott in the "Sydney Morning Herald" on 9th May this year he said:-

"It is a small matter for pride that almost a century of British rule has left Fiji so ill-prepared to fend for itself - a lovely, sea-girt tropical land of poor communications, rough dirt roads, an inadequate educational system, with great tracts of badly needed land left to scrub, with the seas teeming with fish and no real fishing industry, with food imported which could easily be grown, with a great hydro-electric potential untapped, with irrigation and flood control neglected, with no secondary industry worthy of the name."

Despite the fact that Australia has obtained considerable profit from Fiji, the application of the Fiji Government to Australia last year for a Government-to-Government loan of \$9,000,000 to help finance her five-year development programme was summarily rejected, and Australia's assistance to Fiji through the tiny amount given to the South Pacific Commission and the

South Pacific Technical Assistance programme is so small as to be in itself an affront. Fiji's lack of development, Fiji's communal tensions, and the constitutional problems arising from them have grown from Australian exploitation and neglect. It is time immediately to right this by measures available to us. I do not consider Fiji any less our responsibility than New Guinea and Papua. What is more, apart from development assistance, we could assist Fiji by allowing immigration on a very much more generous scale than we are now doing to Australia of people who have reached an adequate standard to be integrated into our community. There are very many of these people.

While a few Fijians and Fijian-born Indians are at present allowed into Australia, their class is extremely restricted. Wider immigration to Australia would present us with no problems, but could assist for a period in relieving the unemployment situation developing rapidly in Fiji for those who have obtained some degree of education. I fail to understand why we should bring migrants all the way from Europe when on our door step we have people to whom we owe much - and for whom we do nothing.

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